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WHOLE No. 432

THE AMERICAN CLASSICAL LEAGUE

Those who are devoted to a cause that is constantly meeting opposition usually organize for defense. No illustration is necessary of what may be accomplished by united action even in the field of education. But we classicists with all our faith in Greek and Latin and with excellent societies for the improvement of scholarship and pedagogy have been neglectful of this duty. At local public meetings we expound our faith to small audiences composed largely of believers whose irksome attendance has been secured through the personal exhortation of some well-meaning nuisance. The present writer has probably victimized as many of the faithful as any other bore, but he is prepared to sin no more—in this direction. He has, however, always believed in the possibility of a different sort of effort, a movement which should be rather offensive than defensive, something less ladylike and more aggressive. This was feasible only for a national association with such force of numbers behind it as alone seems to compel attention, if not respect, in our democratic country.

Obviously the American Philological Association could not undertake such work; it is dedicated to quite other purposes. On the other hand, the organization of the American Classical League with an annual meeting held in connection with the great National Education Association has given us a really effective combination for all kinds of battling, and it merely rests with us what the fighting shall be. The pamphlets printed by the League are already potent on a larger scale than our local associations could ever hope to achieve. Whatever the attitude of individuals may be towards the special investigations that it has instituted, we must realize that it is a great move forward merely to engage so many persons in a collective enterprise that involves no small selfsacrifice among participants. Never before, one may safely say, have so many busy teachers united for work in our subject. And the best of it is that many other than classicists have been enlisted, including not a few who have joined from camps that have not always flown our flag.

But why stop with this? Suggestions for undertaking other lines of activity are and have been welcome. An organization like the American Classical League could advantageously employ field workers who would give their whole time to strengthening the position of the Classics in School and College. Isolated teachers of Greek and Latin and even small groups of them often have to contend impotently against unfair treatment of their subjects that would cease, if an expert investigator exposed it to general publicity.

The requirements in Latin for students of law and of medicine suffer changes unfavorable to proper standards which united action could prevent. To organize a protest of letters from lawyers or doctors, as the case might be, who are known to advocate a classical training is a task proper to the League. A census of eminent editors whose assistance can be counted upon in such matters has already been begun.

Some of the contributions of psychology to the science of education have proved to be defective and misleading. While the psychologist himself has duly emended his theories, as a scholar should, there are certain of his former dicta which men in authority in our Public School systems are still repeating and using against us to our very great harm. The present attitude of our leading psychologists with reference, for instance, to the disciplinary value of this or that subject needs publication in terse and handy form for controversial use against the ignorant or the wilfully unfair.

A central bureau for the information and the placement of teachers of Greek and Latin of every grade might eventually be established. Merely a listing of all who are at work in our field would be of immediate value for various purposes.

These and many other possibilities have naturally suggested themselves to the reader, but the thought to emphasize is that all of us should lend a hand. There should be none so poor in intellect that he cannot proffer constructive ideas, nor so supercritical of what has already been done that he cannot show goodwill. It is so easy to dodge service on the plea of dislike for this or that worker or for this or that line of effort, but anyone who attended all the meetings of the American Classical League in Boston last July, as the writer did, was bound to sense the powerful support it could give the cause in which we so firmly believe. Under the skillful, open-minded presidency of Dean West able men and women from all parts of our country reported conditions, interchanged views, and proposed new projects. Disagreement might make the discussion lively, but the pervading spirit, whether in the piping hot committee-room or in comfortable old Faneuil Hall itself, was always that of friends who were cooperating enthusiastically to give Greek and Latin teachers a fighting union worthy of our convictions. When we can rally against the foe many more thousands in one organization, we shall have our hearing everywhere. Numbers count: let us raise them to the maximum.

WALTON BROOKS McDANIEL